3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

horns.[1] The seven families at Kaying Bashi keep about 25 yaks, 10 ponies, 30 head of ordinary cattle and half a dozen camels, besides a few animals owned by the inhabitants of the side-glens of Sarigh Yon and Ghorumda. The total number of sheep and goats in the valley, I was told, is between 3,000 and 4,000.

There are no houses (*tām*) in the Kaying Jilgha, only a few shelters made of branches under trees or against overhanging rocks (*kotan*). The tents (*aq-oi*) used by the Kirghiz, though smaller and poorer, are similar to those described by Miss Sykes in the Russian Pamirs.[2] The average size and condition of the tents varies greatly in different regions; we found much larger and more elaborate ones in the neighbourhood of Little L. Qarakul in the Chinese Pamirs; those we saw in the Tien Shan north-east of Kashgar, again, were smaller and less ornate but more solid, with thicker layers of felts and not nearly so draughty.

A light tent like the *aq-oi* with a roof shaped like a flattened dome and covered with felts which are far from waterproof, even when sound, is quite unsuited to the wet and stormy climate of the Alps of Qungur. That the inhabitants should have kept to it, refusing to build houses for themselves like the Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh, is a remarkable instance of tenacious adhesion to ancestral habits. They have one great advantage, however, over the inhabitants of the comparatively dry Pamirs; instead of the small quantities of dried plants and dung which are the only fuel to be had in the latter region, they have unlimited firewood of the best quality, fir, juniper, etc., all round them. In cold or wet weather you will always find a roaring fire in an *aq-oi*, and right welcome it is. The problem of keeping the circular aperture in the roof, which does

[1] A Kashgar dealer will pay as much as 2½ or 3 taels (6*s.* 8*d.*–8*s.*) for a first-class red fox skin; ibex and stag horns are used by the Chinese in the concoction of certain medicines and dopes.

[2] "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," pp. 115–16. The figures given by Miss Sykes for the cost of an *aq-oi* are very much higher than in the Qaratash valley. I was told that the forty curved roof-poles and sections of trellis which compose the framework of an *aq-oi* cost 2 tengas (4*d.*) each, and the felts, when new, from 8 to 15 taels between them (21*s.* 4*d.*–£2). The camel-hair ropes and long strips of woollen webbing (*taghar*) with which the framework is bound together under the felts are all home-made, but could be bought for three or four taels; total say £2–£3. Probably Miss Sykes' figures include the carpets, screens, bolsters, etc., with which an *aq-oi* is furnished; these, if the owner is rich, may be worth large sums.